2025-2026
Model Arab League
BACKGROUND GUIDE

Council of Arab Environmental Affairs Ministers

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Original draft by Aleen Hussain, Chair of the Environmental Affairs Council at the 2026 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations

Honorable Delegates,

Welcome to the 2025/2026 National Model Arab League and the Environmental Affairs Council. My name is Aleen Hussain, and I am a junior at Georgia State University in Atlanta, majoring in Psychology and Finance. I've been involved with NCUSAR's Model Arab League for over six years, starting in high school, and it's an honor to serve you now as your chair for this council at the national level.

Although I am not particularly drawn to real-life politics, the Model Arab League consistently engages me. It helps me gain a deeper understanding of the current state of the world while developing soft skills, studying diplomacy, and grasping the complex relationships that shape our global landscape, especially in the Arab world. This council encourages us to think critically about our surroundings, consider how we impact them, and recognize the importance of regional collaboration. I look forward to seeing how this year's pressing and significant issues are addressed.

In this guide, you'll find an overview of our four agenda items:

I. Revitalizing agriculture through traditional and indigenous methods
II. Mitigating environmental degradation in conflict zones
III. Strengthening environmental education for youth
IV. Assessing how natural disasters affect migration and infrastructure access.

These topics were selected not only for their relevance to the MENA region, but because they ask us to think innovatively—about both science and society, resilience and recovery. Your research, preparation, and in-character diplomacy will be crucial in shaping a meaningful conversation that reflects the Arab League's priorities and challenges.

As chair, my responsibility is to create a committee environment that is inviting, productive, and intellectually stimulating. I strongly advise you to begin your policy research early, understand your assigned countries' national interests thoroughly, and be intentional in how you engage with others during debate. The best moments in committee often arise when preparation meets collaboration.

I look forward to hearing your debate, seeing your creativity, and watching you grow throughout the conference. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me at ahussain33@student.gsu.edu with any questions as you prepare - I'm always happy to support your success.

Wishing you all the best in your research and preparation. Let's make it a strong, inspiring council.

Warm regards,
Aleen Hussain
Chair, Environmental Affairs Council

Topic I: Researching ways to revitalize agriculture by utilizing traditional & indigenous methods and techniques.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

For generations, traditional agricultural systems—such as qanats, aflaj, zai pits, terrace irrigation, and micro-catchment wadi farming—have sustained communities in arid and semi-arid regions of the Middle East and North Africa for centuries. These gravity-fed techniques typically require minimal mechanization, optimize water efficiency, and preserve soil health in environments where less than 5% of land is arable and most rainfall is erratic.[1] As climate change intensifies regional water scarcity and increases risks of drought and desertification, these approaches provide a proven model for resilient food production amidst resource constraints.[2]

High-yield monocultures, deep groundwater extraction, and extensive irrigation infrastructure have been given top priority in the MENA region's recent agricultural boom. Even though these measures momentarily raised crop yields, they hastened soil erosion, aquifer depletion, and salinization—especially in nations like Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt, where water tables have fallen sharply in recent decades.[3] Farmland degradation and biodiversity loss have persisted at the same time, which has decreased long-term production and the viability of rural livelihoods.

Recent policy assessments—such as FAO's Regional Overview for Near East & North Africa and the OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook—recommend integrating agroecological and indigenous practices to bolster productivity while safeguarding environmental health.[4] Blending traditional methods (e.g., qanat-fed micro-irrigation) with modern low-pressure drip systems and community-managed seed banks has shown measurable improvements in yield stability and soil retention. As MENA governments and donors pursue climate-smart agriculture, restoring these systems aligns with both sustainability goals and socio-cultural revitalization.

B. History in the Arab World

Some of humanity's first highly developed agricultural systems were developed in the Middle East and North Africa. Large civilizations were maintained for millennia in Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley by canal-fed irrigated agriculture, while qanat and aflaj networks established thriving oases in arid regions of Yemen, Oman, Algeria, and

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[1] Food Agriculture Organization. Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in the Near East and North Africa (2023) https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/37ccc4cb-b402-4be1-9e92-92fcff8ffbc
[2] OECD and FAO. OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2018–2027: Special Chapter on MENA https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2018/07/oecd-fao-agricultural-outlook-2018-2027_g1g8c661.html
[3] Aw-Hassan, A. Trends in Groundwater Abstraction for Irrigation in MENA States, Journal of Environmental Management, 2014 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298348059_Aden_Aw-Hassan_Fadel_Rida_Roberto_
[4] FAO FAPDA database and priority-setting reviews https://www.fao.org/in-action/fapda/fapda-policy-database/en/

Morocco.[5] These systems promoted locally informed, community-based water governance and allowed for a variety of cropping patterns, such as fruit, legumes, and grains.

Many ancient systems lost institutional backing in the 20th century when colonial administration and industrialization took over. Smaller-scale, environmentally conscious farming was eclipsed by cash-crop monocultures, centralized irrigation systems, and subsidized groundwater pumping. Many village-based terrace systems in the Maghreb were abandoned as a result of labor migration and state neglect, while over-extraction of aquifers in Lebanon and Jordan quickly decreased the yields of traditional dryland systems.[6]

A number of Arab League nations have started to revalue these customs in the past 20 years. Local seed banks and agroecological pilots have been encouraged by FAO extension programs and CIHEAM's Feeding Knowledge initiative, while Tunisia and Morocco have backed terrace restoration initiatives and community-managed water systems.[7] These initiatives demonstrate the potential for policy-supported resurrection as instruments for food sovereignty and rural resilience, reflecting a growing understanding of the cultural and environmental significance of indigenous practices.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

Prioritizing mechanization and extensive irrigation, which were frequently financed by national governments or foreign donors, produced short-term benefits at the expense of environmental sustainability and local sovereignty. According to World Bank and FAO studies, these modernization strategies worsen land degradation and rural vulnerability in the absence of participatory governance and soil conservation measures.[8] As a result, there was less resilience to drought and violence when farmers were not involved or traditional infrastructure was not preserved.

The promise of hybrid agricultural approaches is demonstrated by ongoing projects, such as drip-irrigated plots fed by rehabilitated qanat channels, farmer-led cooperatives that combine climate finance tools with local expertise, and communal seed libraries combined with training in biochar soil amendment.[9] Projects funded by the CIHEAM and FAO in Yemen, Morocco, and Lebanon have demonstrated that employing these combined techniques can result in crop yield gains of up to 30% while drastically

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[5] CIHEAM reports on Mediterranean irrigation heritage; World Bank case studies on Middle East ancient systems https://om.ciheam.org/ressources/om/pdf/a88/a88.pdf

[6] World Bank Reducing Vulnerability to Climate Change in Agricultural Systems, Eastern Mediterranean (2013) https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/265291468193511436/pdf/815920PUB0Redu00Box379836B00PUBLIC0.pdf

[7] CIHEAM Feeding Knowledge (2017); FAO rural advisory systems https://www.ciheam.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/FAO-CIHEAM-1.pdf

[8] FAO modernization manuals; World Bank environmental impact review https://www.fao.org/climatechange/29103-02e9a33753ffc325da1e25250c06c927b.pdf

[9] World Bank and FAO pilot evaluations of agroecological projects in Lebanon https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/6faef807-cd8f-474a-bbf9-853124d4432f/content

reducing water consumption. Additionally, in vulnerable rural regions, conservation strategies for seeds and soil promote agrobiodiversity and climate resilience.

A Regional Agricultural Heritage and Innovation Network, which offers delegated governance, technical interchange, and demonstration farms, could help the Arab League formalize these achievements in the future. A resolution might suggest seed-saving public-private partnerships, an Arab League seed bank effort, or climate financing for biochar and agroecological cooperatives. Additionally, regional evaluation frameworks might incorporate metrics that acknowledge ecosystem services, such as carbon capture, recharge, and soil retention, guaranteeing that sustainable agriculture acquires both ecological and economic validity.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Which particular traditional farming systems were once practiced in the nation you were allocated, and what economic or cultural reasons contributed to their maintenance or abandonment? Examine the development of ancient infrastructure, such as terrace fields, seed banks, or qanats, and whether their preservation was a part of national planning.
- What institutional and structural obstacles prevent traditional farming methods from being revived in your nation? Consider factors other than technological constraints, such as centralized control, financial shortfalls, rural-to-urban migration, or political priorities.
- Without weakening local authority or exposing them to extractive development paradigms, how could your nation assist smallholder farmers in scaling up traditional practices? Try to think about how to safeguard agroecological literacy, equitable funding, and cooperative governance.
- How may national adaptation strategies or frameworks for sustainable development incorporate traditional farming methods? Find out how your nation might coordinate these initiatives with regional climate resilience programming, carbon credits, or SDG targets.

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- In order to preserve and revitalize traditional agricultural expertise, should the Arab League create a Regional Heritage Agriculture Network or Fund?
- What are some ways that regional frameworks, like carbon credit markets, ecosystem payment plans, or subsidy transfers, can provide financial incentives for agroecology and conventional techniques?
- Could the Arab League create initiatives based on effective international models and modify them to fit the needs of the MENA region?
- When it comes to scaling these solutions, which institutional partnerships—universities, rural cooperatives, and foreign donors—should be given priority?
- Should national agricultural extension services be encouraged by the Arab League to explicitly incorporate traditional methods into their training programs?
- How may this aid in the establishment of sustainable food systems as well as cultural preservation?

IV. Additional Resources

CIHEAM: Mediterranean Traditional Agricultural Systems and Food Sovereignty

An in-depth analysis of Mediterranean community-driven agriculture and native irrigation methods, featuring case studies from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Lebanon.

FAO's Near East and North Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition (2023)

Provides information on regional trends in food security, the effects of water shortages, and important tactics for the Arab world's sustainable agricultural growth.

World Bank – Increasing Resilience to Climate Change in the Agricultural Sector of the Middle East: The Cases of Jordan and Lebanon

A regional project evaluation focused on Jordan, Lebanon, and the West Bank & Gaza, including practical suggestions for integrating traditional systems into adaptive planning.

New AG International – Regenerative Agriculture in the MENA Region (2024 Yearbook Chapter)

Explores recent trends in soil regeneration, biochar, and water-smart agriculture in the MENA region with references to blended traditional-modern techniques.

Topic II: Mitigating environmental degradation in areas affected by armed conflict

I. Introduction

A. General Background

Degradation of the environment, from soil erosion, pollution, and deforestation to the breakdown of water infrastructure, is frequently a subtle but disastrous effect of armed conflict. By destroying ecosystems, reducing the ability of governments to govern, and redirecting funds from environmental preservation to military endeavors, war hastens the collapse of the environment. Because of the region's pre-existing ecological fragility and pervasive reliance on natural resources for basic services and livelihoods, the effects of conflict on the environment have grown especially severe in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The exploitation of natural resources, such as land, water, and fuel, has been implicated in over 40% of internal conflicts worldwide over the past three decades, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). These factors are even more crucial in the resource-constrained environments of MENA states.[10]

Deliberate or accidental targeting of fuel storage facilities, industrial sites, agriculture, or water treatment facilities during armed conflicts can contaminate soil, air, and groundwater for a long time. For instance, the devastation of chemical stores and oil refineries in Syria unleashed heavy metals and carcinogens into the environment.[11] The collapse of water treatment and sanitation infrastructure in Yemen, which was made worse by frequent attacks on pumping stations, left almost 58% of the population without access to safe water.[12] In addition to creating immediate devastation, protracted conflict can result in armed groups or desperate communities illegally overusing forests, aquifers, and arable land, placing unsustainable strain on already delicate ecosystems.

Environmental conservation must be seen as a cornerstone of both humanitarian aid and peacebuilding, as wars increasingly take place in areas that are ecologically vulnerable and densely populated. Degradation of the environment does not only happen after war; if it is not addressed, it can impede post-war rehabilitation and worsen the underlying reasons of insecurity. Particularly in areas already experiencing desertification, climatic stress, or water insecurity, the UN Environment Assembly and the International Law Commission have underlined that environmental repair and resilience planning are essential components of post-conflict reconstruction.[13]

B. History in the Arab World

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[10] United Nations Environment Programme. "Protecting the Environment During Armed Conflict: An Inventory and Analysis of International Law," 2009. https://ceobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/int_law.pdf
[11] PAX Netherlands. "Amidst the Debris: A Study of the Environmental Impact of Conflict in Syria," 2017. https://paxforpeace.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/import/import/pax-report-amidst-the-debris-syria-web.pdf
[12] UNICEF and WHO. "Water Under Fire: Emergencies, Development and Peace in Fragile Contexts," 2021 https://www.unicef.org/reports/emergencies-development-peace-in-fragile-and-conflict-affected-contexts-2019
[13] UN Environment Assembly. "Environmental Dimensions of Armed Conflicts and Disasters," Resolution UNEA-2/15, 2016 https://docs.un.org/en/A/71/25

Political instability and ecological fragility have long been problems for the Arab world. Armed conflict has frequently destroyed the region's natural resources, from the civil war in Lebanon in the 1980s to the occupation of Iraq in the 2000s and the more recent wars in Syria, Libya, Palestine, and Yemen. Saddam Hussein's politically driven decision to drain the Mesopotamian marshes in Iraq resulted in a catastrophic ecological collapse, destroying one of the most significant wetlands in the world and forcing thousands of Marsh Arabs to relocate.[14] In a similar vein, Israel's incursions in southern Lebanon and the civil war in Lebanon caused extensive deforestation, which decreased the amount of forest cover by more than 35% and increased the risk of landslides and erosion in hilly regions.[15]

An example of how conflict can directly result in environmental catastrophes is the Israeli war on Lebanon in 2006 and the oil spill that followed in Jiyeh. More than 150 kilometers of coastline were contaminated, and marine life was seriously harmed when a power station was bombed, releasing more than 15,000 tons of fuel oil into the Mediterranean.[16] The civil conflict in Syria has lasted more than ten years, causing 75% of the agricultural infrastructure in some governorates to deteriorate. Additionally, the expansion of informal trash burning activities has contributed to an increase in respiratory ailments[17]. Water networks, desalination plants, and sewage treatment plants in Palestine are in chronic disrepair due to blockades and frequent military invasions; as a result, the Gaza Strip is currently experiencing one of the greatest water crises in the world.[18]

Regional frameworks for environmental protection during conflict are still lacking, despite the increasing awareness of these trends. Without enforceable procedures, the majority of Arab League environmental charters date back to before the current period of protracted intra-state conflict. However, recent efforts have started to incorporate post-conflict environmental recovery into regional planning, such as the 2017 Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and the UNEP–League of Arab States strategic cooperation. However, there are still large gaps in coordination and financial limitations.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

Historically, the Arab League and its member countries have primarily addressed environmental degradation in conflict zones through infrastructure repair and emergency humanitarian relief, often overlooking long-term ecological recovery or the intricate links between environmental damage and conflict cycles. For example, reconstruction programs in Iraq and Lebanon were primarily concerned with restoring basic water and

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[14] Richardson, J. “The Draining of the Marshes of Iraq,” Environmental History, 2006
https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article-abstract/56/6/477/275171?redirectedFrom=fulltext
[15] FAO. “Forestry in Crisis: A Regional Overview,” MENA Environmental Status Reports, 2018
https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/f8b1c590-8521-43f9-85c8-ef0e66
[16] UNDP. “Lebanon Oil Spill Response,” Situation Reports Archive, 2014
https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/lb/222.pdf
[17] ICRC. “Syria Ten Years On: Environmental Scars of War,” 2021
https://www.icrc.org/en/article/icrc-voices-contending-syrias-deadly-legacy-war
[18] Al-Shabaka. “Water Apartheid in Palestine,” 2020
https://al-shabaka.org/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=1720311813&gbraid

sanitation infrastructure, but they rarely included environmental restoration methods or thorough impact studies. This negligence exposed many ecologically fragile areas to secondary displacement, resource constraint, and long-term instability.

In recent years, however, regional and global stakeholders have turned their focus to more integrated and environmentally sensitive recovery strategies. The FAO has launched emergency agricultural rehabilitation programs in Yemen and Syria, providing climate-resilient seeds, soil restoration training, and support for sustainable land use practices to prevent further degradation of farmlands and ecosystems.[19] The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has conducted post-conflict environmental assessments in Sudan and Iraq, identifying toxic waste, oil contamination, and deforestation caused by military operations. They also provide technical assistance for site cleanups and reforestation.[20] These strategies not only repair damaged land but also restore vital ecosystem services like clean water access and air quality, both of which are critical to rebuilding livelihoods and decreasing future conflict risks.

Additionally, national legislative reforms are emerging as a key component of sustainable post-conflict governance. Iraq's Environmental Protection Law No. 27 of 2009 requires environmental impact assessments for development projects and grants enforcement authority to prevent pollution during reconstruction.[21] These regulatory advances are essential because they institutionalize ecological safeguards and provide legal frameworks for sustainable rebuilding—ensuring that environmental considerations are not sidelined in moments of political urgency or economic recovery. By embedding these principles into national law, countries create a foundation for accountability, ecological resilience, and long-term peacebuilding.

In the future, the Arab League might lead regional innovation by establishing a Task Force on Environmental Recovery in Conflict-Affected Areas, modeled after the International Law Commission, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the United Nations Environment Program. This task force might oversee projects like cross-border ecological restoration corridors, mobile environmental monitoring labs, and capacity-building workshops for local environmental officials in post-conflict areas. A regional environmental damage record similar to the one used during the Gulf War would be an important instrument for documenting, reparations, and historical accountability. Finally, incorporating ecological security into Arab League peacebuilding and stabilization frameworks—by including environmental measures in post-conflict assessments—will be critical to achieving long-term recovery, community resilience, and sustainable regional growth.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

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[19] UNEP. "Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment: Sudan," 2007; FAO Emergency and Resilience Reports
https://unipd-centrodirittiumani.it/storage/media/89/f8/Thesis_-_Silvia_Girardi_-_matr111610.pdf
[20] UNEP. *Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment: Sudan*.
https://www.unep.org/resources/post-conflict-environmental-assessment-sudan
[21] Republic of Iraq. Law No. 27 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Improvement. Summary via FAOLEX.
https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC104207

- How has armed conflict affected the environment in your assigned country, either directly or indirectly, and how has it handled such crises in the past? Take into account both regional spillover impacts, such as deforestation, oil spills, toxic waste, and infrastructure loss, as well as domestic disputes.
- What institutional or legal structures are in place in your nation to evaluate, lessen, or repair environmental harm brought on by occupation or conflict? These could include collaborations with international organizations like the ICRC or UNEP, military behavior codes, or ministries dedicated to environmental conservation.
- How much of a role does environmental security play in regional and national peacebuilding in your nation?
- Is the environment incorporated into your frameworks for climate adaptation, transitional justice initiatives, or national reconstruction planning?
- How can your nation support a League-wide approach that strikes a balance between environmental accountability, cross-border monitoring, post-conflict restoration assistance, and sovereignty? Consider the incentives and obstacles to finance cooperation, data exchange, and institutional development among Arab League members.

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- Is it necessary for the Arab League to develop a uniform "Environmental Conflict Assessment Framework" that member states can utilize both during and after military conflicts?
- How might external partners or national ministries be involved in this coordination?
- What financing sources may be set up or increased to help with environmental cleanup in areas affected by conflict?
- Could this be an Arab League environmental recovery fund, private-public partnerships, environmental levies, or climate finance?
- What legal loopholes should the League fill in regarding long-term environmental warfare, infrastructure targeting, and ecocide?
- Should a resolution encourage international legal advocacy or demand changes to the Arab Charter on Human Rights?
- How can the League encourage environmental restoration to be incorporated into more comprehensive post-conflict reconciliation initiatives?
- How might environmental resilience be incorporated into peace agreements, refugee return programs, or reconstruction plans?

IV. Additional Resources

UNEP – *Preliminary Environmental Assessment of the Conflict in Gaza (2024)*

This report provides a comprehensive evaluation of the environmental destruction caused by recent warfare in Gaza, including debris management, oil and chemical contamination, and air and water risks.

ICRC – *Making Adaptation Work: Addressing Environmental Degradation in Protracted Conflict Zones* (2023)

This policy report discusses how climate change and war interact in places like Yemen and Syria, emphasizing practical environmental protections in humanitarian law.

Environmental Peacebuilding Association – *Post-Conflict Environmental Remediation Toolkit*

This guide outlines frameworks for conflict-sensitive ecological recovery, including financing, coordination, and legal mechanisms.

UNEA-6 / BIC Report – *Strengthening Environmental Resilience in Conflict Zones: Analysis of UNEA-6 Resolutions and PERAC* (2024)

A briefing on recent global resolutions relevant to conflict-environment intersections, with applications for MENA post-conflict zones.

Topic III: Strengthening the Arab League's focus on environmental education, specifically in the youth population

I. Introduction

A. General Background

Environmental education, also known as education for sustainable development (ESD) or climate change education, enables young people to acquire the knowledge, values, and skills necessary to overcome environmental problems. Youth account for an astounding 60% of the population in certain MENA countries, and they are increasingly impacted by resource constraints, food insecurity, and climate change.[22] Even though they make up a sizable proportion of the population, young people are largely excluded from formal and informal climate and sustainability education programs, limiting their ability to participate in civic life in a region grappling with fragile ecosystems and rising temperatures. This exclusion can be attributed to a range of political and structural barriers—such as underfunded public education systems, lack of standardized environmental literacy goals, and minimal inclusion of youth voices in climate discourse.[23] Without targeted reforms and investment in both formal schooling and informal community programs, this critical segment of the population risks being alienated from shaping the environmental future of their region.

MENA nations fall behind in integrating environmental literacy into their national curricula, despite global advancements made possible by frameworks such as UNESCO's ESD projects and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4.7 on Education for Sustainable Development). According to a thorough analysis, even though young people are quite open to learning about climate change, very few education ministries in the region have created stand-alone curricula or teacher training programs.[24] Low understanding of environmental threats and adaptation methods is a result of this misalignment between institutional implementation and young interests.

Education for youth empowerment provides real advantages for resilience, social innovation, and national development; it is not only an academic endeavor. Critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership abilities are developed through environmental education and are crucial for creating sustainable communities and economies. The regional youth climate action report from UNESCO emphasizes how including climate knowledge in the curriculum enhances student agency and helps grassroots climate activities.[25] By giving youth-centered environmental education first priority, the Arab

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[22] OECD. Youth in the MENA Region: How to Bring Them In (2016) https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2016/12/youth-in-the-mena-region_g1g71a3c/9789264265721-en.pdf

[23] Onyeaka, H., & Akinsemolu, A. A. "Advancing green education in the MENA region" (2024) https://pure-oai.bham.ac.uk/ws/files/237832547/sd.3182.pdf

[24] UNESCO. Youth Demands for Quality Climate Change Education (2022) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383615

[25] UNESCO. Regional Report on Knowledge for Youth-Led Climate Action (2023) https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/regional-report-knowledge-youth-led-climate-action-arab-region

League hopes to foster immediate social cohesion and regional collaboration around common environmental issues in addition to preparing future leaders.

B. History in the Arab World

Multilateral initiatives like UNESCO and EU-funded NET-MED Youth, which engaged youth from Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia in policy discussions and community-level sustainability activism, have gradually created regional momentum on youth engagement in environmental learning.[26] Through cross-national learning hubs, capacity-building workshops, and civic engagement activities, these programs helped set an example for youth empowerment and demonstrated how young people can be true partners in the discussion of environmental policy.

This has been mirrored, however unevenly, at the national level. Lebanon has launched climate clubs and extracurricular activities at UNESCO biosphere reserves, while Jordan has implemented established teacher training modules on sustainable development in a few schools.[27] With the help of the environment and education ministries, youth councils and university partnerships throughout the Gulf region, like the one at the Mohamed Bin Zayed University for Humanities, have created customized campaigns on air pollution, desertification, and water conservation.[28] However, these are stand-alone projects rather than being incorporated into larger frameworks for educational reform.

However, structural issues persist: growing juvenile environmental education throughout the region is frequently hampered by uneven funding, a lack of required curriculum standards, inadequate teacher preparation, and a lack of evaluation tools. Comprehensive surveys reveal that vulnerable groups—adolescents, refugees, girls, and youth with disabilities—are the ones most neglected by environmental education programs. UNICEF's MENA youth report also warns of pervasive juvenile marginalization.[29] To ensure that education promotes learning, leadership, and social fairness, closing these disparities calls for both deliberate inclusion and legislative reform.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

Historically, environmental education in the Middle East and North Africa has been scattered and short-lived, generally consisting of donor-funded pilot programs, isolated teacher training, and ad hoc climate awareness campaigns. While these efforts have had an impact on the community, they have rarely resulted in systemic change. According to the UNESCO-funded Task Force on Climate Change Education and Outreach in the

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[26] UNESCO. NET-MED Youth Project Evaluation Report (2019) https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369078

[27] UNESCO Greening Education Implementation Guide (2025) https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2024/09/Greening%20curriculum%20guidance%20Teaching%20and%20learning%20for%20climate%20action.pdf

[28] Aboukhousa, H. "Promoting climate action through youth empowerment"—UAE case (2024) https://systems.enpress-publisher.com/index.php/jipd/article/viewFile/8636/4193

[29] UNICEF. MENA Youth Marginalisation & Climate Impact Report (2023) https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/23816/file/Growing%20Up%20in%20a%20Changing%20Climate%20.pdf

Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East (EMME), the majority of initiatives lacked long-term funding, institutional support, or integration into national educational strategies, effectively disconnecting formal schooling and informal youth programs from regional sustainability objectives.[30] Conflict zones such as Syria, Yemen, and Libya confront even more difficult issues due to destroyed educational infrastructure, displacement, and inadequate government, further limiting access to climate literacy and youth participation chances.

Recently, promising regional models have started to develop. Cyprus's Climate Change Education and Outreach Task Force (EMME) is one example, which advocated for the regional establishment of unified climate literacy frameworks, curricular alignment, and ESD-specific teacher training.[31] These techniques seek to standardize environmental education in a variety of situations, including fragile and conflict-affected areas, by providing scalable models that can be adapted by NGOs or informal education networks when state-led systems are overwhelmed. In parallel, youth-led organizations like the Arab Youth Council for Climate Change have used digital platforms and policy lobbying to elevate young voices in environmental governance and knowledge sharing across borders, especially in locations where in-person organizing is dangerous or prohibited[32]. Their projects have demonstrated how social media, online modules, and diaspora interaction can be used to promote ESD in remote areas.

Looking ahead, the Arab League may adopt a Regional Climate and Environmental Education Charter that requires member states to incorporate age-appropriate, context-sensitive climate education into both formal and informal institutions. This charter may include flexible implementation tracks for conflict-affected areas, where non-governmental organisations (NGOs), foreign partners (such as UNESCO and UNEP), and local educators can collaborate to deliver mobile, digital, or radio-based learning modules. A pan-regional Arab Youth Climate Education Network might act as a clearinghouse for sharing teaching materials, tracking civic engagement, and conducting effect assessments. Pilot initiatives in UNESCO biosphere reserves, particularly in Lebanon, Egypt, and Morocco, could serve as models for hands-on ecological learning, even in politically unstable areas. Incorporating environmental education into national recovery plans, refugee programs, and peacebuilding activities will not only enhance sustainability but also empower young people as agents of resilience and regional cooperation.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How common is environmental education in Arab League member states' national curricula, and which nations have passed laws requiring it to be taught in

[30] Scoullos, M. et al., Report of the Task Force on Climate Change Education and Outreach (2022) https://digital.csic.es/bitstream/10261/307821/1/Joint_Plan_Climate_Change_Adaptation_Mediterranean_MPAs_2022.pdf

[31] Scoullos, M., & Zachariou, A. Climate Change Education and Outreach in EMME Region (2022) https://emme-cci.org/wp-content/uploads/CC_edu_in_EMME_report.pdf

[32] Arab Youth Council for Climate Change: Mobilizing Youth for a Sustainable Future (2019) https://arabyouthcenter.org/en/download-file/research/500/arab-youth-council-for-climate-change-mobilizing-youth-for-a-sustainable-future

elementary and secondary schools? Evaluate the Ministry of Education's current frameworks to determine where environmental literacy is deficient or used inconsistently.

- What financial, cultural, and structural obstacles prevent kids in underprivileged, rural, and refugee areas from receiving education that is focused on climate change? Think about how disparities impact access to environmental education and information, especially for girls, displaced youth, and people living in conflict areas.
- How well have regional and international initiatives (such as the Arab Youth Council for Climate Change and NET-MED Youth) impacted national policy or expanded local pilot projects? Investigate which projects have a long-term effect and where more assistance is required.
- Which scalable methods work best for incorporating sustainability and climate change education into K–12 curricula across a range of socioeconomic, language, and religious contexts? To compare implementation tactics, examine case studies from Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates.
- In order to guarantee that environmental education is successful and focused on young people, how can the Arab League assist with curriculum creation, teacher training, and monitoring systems? This raises questions about alignment with SDGs 4.7 and 13.3, capacity-building, and regional training centers.

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What would the main elements of a regional environmental education charter—such as curricular requirements, youth representation, and finance sources—be if the Arab League were to adopt one?
- How can national planning on environmental literacy and curriculum development incorporate student councils and youth-led organizations?
- Which public-private partnerships may be used to offer resources that engage children outside of the classroom, such as community gardens, climate clubs, and digital learning tools?
- How would the League finance and expand a network of hubs or Environmental Education Centers connected to youth innovation labs or UNESCO Biosphere Reserves?
- Should the League establish a scholarship program or "Arab Youth Environmental Leadership Fellowship" to support upcoming green educators and innovators?

IV. Additional Resources

UNESCO – Education for Sustainable Development (ESD): Policy Briefs and Regional Data

Provides legislative frameworks and educational indicators on how ESD is being implemented in Arab countries, including statistics on curricular integration, teacher training, and national initiatives.

UNICEF MENA – Youth and Climate Report (2022)

An in-depth look at how climate change affects young people in the MENA region, with a focus on education, awareness, and youth-led climate action.

EMME-CCI Task Force Report on Climate Education in the Eastern Mediterranean & Middle East

Outlines regional attempts to coordinate climate education policy, including proposals for teacher training, curriculum standardization, and regional cooperation in fragile nations.

OECD – Youth Inclusion and Education in MENA

Investigates structural barriers to youth receiving equitable and quality education, with an emphasis on policy reforms required for greater inclusion and resilience in conflict-affected areas.

Arab Youth Council for Climate Change – Reports and Fellowship Programs

Highlights youth-led climate leadership projects in the Arab world, such as fellowships, workshops, and policy advocacy programs that improve environmental education and civic involvement.

UNESCO Greening Education Partnership Implementation Guide (2024)

A road plan for incorporating climate change education and sustainability into all parts of education, developed for governments, civil society, and education ministries to adapt to a variety of circumstances.

CIHEAM – Youth and Climate in Mediterranean Agriculture

Examines the intersection of environmental education and agricultural sustainability in the Mediterranean, with a focus on youth engagement through vocational training and climate-smart agriculture innovation.

Topic IV: Assessing the impact of natural disasters on migration and infrastructure access

I. Introduction

A. General Background

About 16.4 million internally displaced people (IDPs), or almost 23% of the world's total for 2022, are now living in the MENA area, while refugees make up 18% of the world's refugee population, with Lebanon and Jordan alone housing nearly 60% of the region's refugee population.[33] When natural catastrophes hit camps or informal settlements, persons who have already been displaced by violence frequently experience secondary displacement. This turns displacement from a temporary emergency into a long-term disaster by limiting humanitarian access and increasing vulnerability.[34]

In the area, there is a growing correlation between displacement and natural disasters like flooding, droughts, and intense heat waves. Weather-related disasters caused more than 32.6 million new internal displacements worldwide in 2022, the most in a decade. People who live in IDP camps or informal settlements without access to basic amenities like secure housing, sanitary facilities, or drainage are disproportionately affected by these calamities.[35] In 2023, hundreds of people were displaced after containment buildings collapsed due to heavy seasonal rains in Yemen's Sa'ada IDP settlements, demonstrating how climatic shocks put displaced people living in crowded and inadequately equipped environments at even greater risk.[36]

This subject is directly related to infrastructure instability and migration brought on by climate change. The risk is increased for both refugees and internally displaced people by factors like flood-prone camps, inadequate urban planning in growth corridors, and settlements lacking adaptable design.[37] Regional coordination and climate-proofing strategies are crucial to breaking cycles of repeated displacement, facilitating humanitarian delivery, and bolstering long-term resilience because many displaced communities are concentrated in vulnerable areas, such as along floodplains, close to eroded coastlines, or in tented camps devoid of resilience.[38]

B. History in the Arab World

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[33] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and IOM Regional Data: 16.2M IDPs in MENA (2022) https://api.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/idmc-grid-2025-global-report-on-internal-displacement.pdf

[34] DGAP. Climate Migration Governance in the MENA Region: Urgent Action Needed (2024) https://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/book_climate_06_climate_migration_governance_in_the_mena.pdf

[35] IDMC Global Report on Internal Displacement: Over 32.6M new displacements in 2022 due to disasters https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2023/

[36] UNHCR & UNHCR site reports on flooding in Yemen IDP settlements (Sa'ada) https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/UNHCR%20Yemen%20Flash%20Update_Floods%20in%20Saada_24%20July%202024.pdf

[37] UNHCR Strategic Framework for Climate Action 2024–203 https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/focus-area-strategic-plan-for-climate-action-2024-2030.pdf

[38] UNHCR's report on climate displacement and settlement vulnerabilities https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/no-escape-unhcr-climate-report-2024.pdf

Large-scale displacement crises in the Arab world have been influenced by environmental hazards and violence, which are frequently combined. Four million people are internally displaced in Yemen as a result of the conflict, many of whom reside in flimsy makeshift settlements that are frequently impacted by floods and seasonal rains. Tarpaulin shelters were demolished by strong rains in Sa'ada in 2023, resulting in rapid secondary relocation and elevated health hazards. Similar to this, millions of refugees live in Lebanon and Jordan, where frequent floods and storms frequently overrun unpaved roads and sanitary facilities, necessitating relocations even within the same site.

There are sizable, long-term Palestinian refugee populations in both Jordan and Lebanon. According to UNRWA data, camps like Shatila (Lebanon) and Za'atari (Jordan) are susceptible to environmental shocks due to their chronic overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and restricted access to services.[39] Extreme heat or flooding further damages water infrastructure, increases the spread of disease, and impairs movement, which increases insecurity and restricts access to aid. These refugee groups have had little access to long-lasting infrastructure improvements despite decades of occupancy, which has gradually increased their danger.

According to DGAP's 2024 report, governance frameworks for climate migration in the MENA region have begun to emerge, acknowledging how disasters and long-term relocation can imprison vulnerable people in cycles of instability.[40] While the Arab League lacks official policies to address climate-related displacement, certain member states have taken the initiative. Jordan, for example, has upgraded solar energy and drainage in the Zaatari refugee camp, while Lebanon has collaborated with UN-Habitat to create climate-resilient housing for flood-prone locations.[41] Regionally, the Arab Ministerial Water Council has recognized the link between climatic stress and displacement. These initiatives indicate an increase in awareness, but a concerted, long-term response from the Arab League is still necessary.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

In the past, responses have prioritized temporary housing, food, and medical assistance, but they frequently ignore environmental hazards that exacerbate relocation. Reconstruction in flood-affected rural Yemen, for example, concentrated on providing temporary shelter subsidies without altering camp layouts or sanitary systems to make them more flood-resistant.[42] In a similar vein, refugee camp structures in Jordan and Lebanon continue to be reactive rather than proactive in predicting climate-related or

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[39] UNRWA data on camp conditions in Jordan and Lebanon (population density, sanitation etc.) https://unrwa.es/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/unrwa_2025_syria_lebanon_and_jordan_emergency_appeal-compressed_0.pdf

[40] DGAP climate migration report policy analysis https://dgap.org/system/files/article_pdfs/dgap-policy%20brief-2023-07-en_0.pdf

[41] UNHCR climate action objectives (2.1–2.3) https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/604a26d84.pdf

[42] OCHA/UNHCR shelter cluster assessments after floods in Yemen (2023) https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/UNHCR%20Yemen%20Flash%20Update%203.pdf

seasonal problems. This reactive approach stresses the resources of the host community and prolongs cycles of repeated displacement.

More robust answers are provided by current models: To enhance roads and sanitation in vulnerable settlements, UNHCR and partners have tested climate-resilient shelters, raised platforms, better drainage, and cash-for-work programs. Experts on disaster displacement advise permanent but adaptable settlement models, which include shared land-use planning that promotes stability and mobility, hybrid service infrastructure, and dwellings that permit impacted people to move in and out periodically[43]. Regional legal frameworks for protecting internally displaced people (IDPs) affected by disasters are also suggested by policies like the Kampala Convention (African precedent), which provides the Arab League with lessons to take into account for asylum seekers and IDPs in its nations.[44]

The Council's support of permanent settlement patterns with climate-proof infrastructure, encampment zoning laws, and early-warning adaptation initiatives are examples of proactive tactics. Resolutions advocating for cross-border IDP camp design regulations, combined with Arab League–UNHCR climate adaptation financing, and collaborations with DRR agencies for seasonal hazard mapping, may be discussed and elaborated upon in debate.. Even as environmental hazards increase, establishing regional collaboration on infrastructure planning, investment in durable settlement designs, and displacement data-sharing will help lessen abrupt moves and enhance access to critical services.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How are cycles of relocation for refugees and internally displaced people in the MENA area exacerbated by natural disasters like floods, droughts, and extremely high temperatures?, Investigate how environmental shocks interact with pre-existing displacement brought on by conflict or economic instability, especially in fragile or informal settlements
- Which Arab League nations have put disaster-resilient infrastructure into place in IDP or refugee camps, and what results have been seen? Examine effective techniques and see whether they can be replicated, such as Yemen's cash-for-shelter initiatives or Jordan's raised camp structures.
- What governance gaps are present in the MENA region's current climate displacement policies, and how can the Arab League aid in standardizing legal protection and coordination? Consider and compare the Global Compact on Refugees and the Kampala Convention..
- What role can partnerships with UNHCR, UNRWA, and regional climate adaptation funds play in creating durable and adaptive settlements for displaced populations?
- How can investment in infrastructure—such as roads, drainage systems, and energy—improve access to essential services in refugee and IDP settlements during and after climate-related disasters?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

[43] Policy studies on permanent settlement models for refugees with climate mobility https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/12
[44] Kampala Convention as applicable legal precedent https://www.fmreview.org/ridderbos/

- Should the Arab League advocate for the creation of models for permanent but mobile refugee settlements that maintain freedom of movement while providing stability to displaced people?
- How may climate-proof building standards, infrastructure zoning, and seasonal planning be incorporated into a League-led regional disaster-risk reduction framework for refugee and internally displaced camps?
- Is it possible for the League to establish a program or shared fund with UNHCR, OCHA, or the Green Climate Fund to enhance disaster response and climate-proof settlements?
- For large displacements after natural disasters, how would the Arab League create a regional early-warning and emergency coordination system?
- Which public-private partnerships might be used to enhance the facilities (such as solar lighting, elevated shelters, water filtration, and sanitation) in camps located in areas that are susceptible to flooding or drought?

IV. Additional Resources

UNHCR – Climate Change and Displacement

Explains how climate-related disasters worsen displacement risks, notably for refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). Provides global and regional recommendations for incorporating climate adaptation into humanitarian planning, such as resilience-based shelter and early warning systems.

DGAP – Climate Migration Governance in the MENA Region: Urgent Action Needed (2024)

This policy research advocates for coordinated regional governance of climate-induced displacement in MENA, emphasizing shortcomings in existing Arab League frameworks. It emphasizes the significance of proactive climate migration plans linked to development and humanitarian goals.

UNRWA – Overview of Palestine Refugees and Camp Infrastructure

Describes present conditions in Palestinian refugee camps, including infrastructure issues, overpopulation, and environmental degradation. Serves as a model for investigating how to handle long-term displacement and where sustainability improvements might be implemented.

IDMC – Global Report on Internal Displacement (2023)

Provides thorough statistics and case studies on global internal displacement, as well as MENA-specific patterns. Highlights the role of conflict, natural disasters, and inadequate infrastructure in causing displacement.

IOM – Displacement Tracking Matrix in MENA (Real-Time Camp Data)

Provides up-to-date information on IDPs and refugee settlements in MENA, including population movements, camp needs assessments, and shelter conditions. A useful resource for real-time reaction planning and long-term settlement design.

World Bank – Climate Resilience in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings

Investigates the integration of climate resilience into development strategies in conflict-affected countries. Emphasizes risk mitigation, robust infrastructure, and institutional support systems for displacement-prone areas.

UNHCR – Shelter & Settlement Guidelines: Climate Resilience in Camp Design

Provides practical advice on building and upgrading displacement shelters to resist environmental stress. Site planning, material selection, and climate-adaptive infrastructure are emphasized as critical to the long-term well-being of refugees.